



**United States Coast Guard**  
**Marine Inspection Office Europe**



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**MARINE SAFETY INFORMATION BULLETIN (MSIB) 06-03**

**December 3, 2003**

**THE U.S. COAST GUARD'S POLICY REGARDING VESSEL  
SECURITY PLANS FOR FOREIGN VESSELS**

Dear Industry Stakeholder,

The U.S. Coast Guard has received a number of inquiries regarding requirements under the Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA) for submission and approval of foreign Vessel Security Plans. These requirements apply to foreign vessels entering the United States that are subject to the International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea 1974, and its Protocol of 1988 (SOLAS) and the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code.

In accordance with MTSA regulations in 33 CFR Subpart H, owners or operators of foreign vessels subject to SOLAS and ISPS **are not required to submit Vessel Security Plans to the U.S. Coast Guard for approval**. Furthermore, owners or operators of these vessels **do not** have to prepare or submit for approval a U.S. Annex to the Vessel Security Plan after July 1, 2004. These vessels must have security plans approved and verified by their Flag Administration or a Recognized Security Organization (RSO) on behalf of the Flag Administration, and must carry on board a valid International Ship Security Certificate (ISSC) issued in accordance with section 19 of Part A of the ISPS Code. This includes ensuring the vessel meets the requirements of SOLAS Chapter XI-2 and the ISPS Code, Part A, having taken into account the relevant provisions of Part B.

The Coast Guard will not approve foreign SOLAS vessel security plans even if requested by the owners or operators. The U.S. Administration is convinced that the SOLAS amendments and the ISPS Code provide an excellent framework for minimizing the threat of terrorism in the maritime community. The United States cannot alone battle this world-wide threat. We need the help of the 102 signatories. The Coast Guard fully intends to abide by the reciprocal obligations in SOLAS and the ISPS Code regarding International Ship Security Certificates (ISSC) and security plans.

**Please report all suspicious Maritime Activity to the National Response Center at 1-800-424-8802**

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An International Ship Security Certificate issued under the ISPS Code will be accepted as evidence that the ship is in compliance with the MTSA and its implementing regulations, with the exception of §§ 104.240, 104.255, 104.292, and 104.295, as appropriate, unless there are clear grounds to believe the certificate is invalid, or the ship is not in compliance. We will verify implementation of the ship security plan through our robust port state control regime.

USCG Headquarters has established a helpdesk to provide information and answer questions about MTSA and other maritime security related work. You can call the desk in the United States at (202) 366-9991, from 0800 to 2000 East Coast Time, or send an email message to [uscgregs@comdt.uscg.mil](mailto:uscgregs@comdt.uscg.mil).



F. J. Sturm  
Captain, U.S. Coast Guard  
Officer in Charge of Marine Inspection

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